



THE CIVIL SOCIETY  
DECLARATION FOR A

# FEMINIST

FOREIGN POLICY

2018

ENGLISH SUMMARY

Sweden has, for several decades, been an important voice for gender equality and girls' and women's rights in the world. In 2014 the Swedish government launched Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy. This was an important political statement which was welcomed by us in civil society.

Ahead of the Swedish election in 2018, we hope that all Swedish political parties will see the importance and the value of the continuation of a Feminist Foreign Policy. In this text we summarise some of the biggest challenges for women's and girl's rights around the world today and our most important recommendations as to how Sweden can contribute to a positive change, through a continued Feminist Foreign Policy.

**The following organisations, all members of CONCORD Sweden's Gender Working Group, have contributed to the text and recommendations of the full report within their respective area of expertise:**

**Afrikagrupperna, the Church of Sweden's International Work, Diakonia, Kvinna till Kvinna, Medecines du Monde Sweden, MÄN, Operation 1325, Plan international Sweden, PMU, PRO Global, RFSL, RFSU, Save the Children Sweden, The Swallows India Bangladesh, Union to Union, Wateraid, We Effect, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Sweden.**

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# 1. DEVELOPMENT POLICY

**SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR) AND EVERY PERSON'S RIGHT TO THEIR OWN BODY:** During the last year we have seen a growing polarisation around issues such as everyone's right to a safe abortion, the rights of LGBTQI persons, and young people's rights to sexual education. Discriminating norms and power structures in relation to sex, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation results in different types of sexual and gender-based violence, such as female genitalia mutilation, forced marriage, prostitution or sex for other forms of compensation, and other types of sexual exploitation. Young people, unmarried people, LGBTQI persons and other marginalised groups are denied their rights to sexual and reproductive health care and information due to discriminative legislation and/or practice in many countries. Sweden's next government must continue to promote a development policy which is transformative and drives normative change, including for everyone's SRHR.

**THE SHRINKING SPACE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY:** In 2015-2016, we saw the introduction of sixty-four new laws globally that infringe on fundamental freedoms and rights. The space for civil society to act is completely closed in at least 20 countries around the world. It is generally closed or most restricted for women's rights defenders and LGBTQI rights defenders, who are subjected to sexual violence, threats of rape and murder, harassment, social exclusion and defamation to a much larger extent than other human rights defenders. Sweden's next government must actively monitor the situation and protect defenders of women's rights and LGBTQI rights, as well as promote democratic space for these actors globally.

**LAND RIGHTS AND THE RIGHT TO FOOD:** World hunger is increasing globally, and women represent 70 percent of the world's hungry. As women farmers hardly ever own the land that they are farming, they don't have access to credit, counselling, compensation or other types of support to the same extent as men. Sweden's next government must work to eliminate legal, social and cultural obstacles in order for women to be able to take control over, or own, land.

## 2. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

**SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS:** Girls and women of all ages have less access to social protection systems than men, since they are over-represented in the informal economy and have fewer possibilities to engage in paid labour due to unpaid care work of children and elderly. The lack of publicly financed childcare and care for the elderly is therefore one of the biggest hindrances for girls and women to educate themselves and access the labour market. Many LGBTQI persons face discrimination in the workplace and they often find it difficult to gain and keep employment. Sweden's next government must support the development of social protection systems and challenge norms and values around gender and responsibilities for the household and the family.

**WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE LABOUR MARKET:** Women face many types of discrimination in the labour market in terms of working conditions and salaries, and in the last ten years women's participation in the formal labour market has declined globally. Women generally have less employment security and do not enjoy the same rights and social benefits as men. The lack of toilets and clean water in the workplace also means that a lot of women cannot work during their period. Sweden's next government must work to ensure that more states live up to important ILO-conventions, and that more women have access to the formal labour market and the possibility of handling their menstrual hygiene in the workplace.

**BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS:** States have an obligation to protect against violations of human rights committed by a third party, such as a private company. Through a Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD), companies can work to prevent, mitigate and account for how they address potential negative effects on human rights. However, studies show that Swedish corporations are lacking in this area. Sweden's next government must ensure that Swedish companies do not contribute to human rights violations, and the state as an owner and investor must set a good example for others to follow.

### 3. PEACE AND SECURITY POLICY

**ARMS EXPORTS, PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT:** The proliferation of arms contributes to the death of 250,000 persons around the world every year. When societies are militarised with widespread proliferation of weapons, girls and women are at much higher risk of being subjected to threats and violence. Sweden's next government must work against the proliferation of small arms and stop Sweden's arms sales to undemocratic states or other states that commit serious human rights violations. Sweden must also, as a promotor of peace, human rights and gender equality, sign and ratify the UN Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

**WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY:** Women are still largely excluded in the area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. As a result of deeply rooted gender norms and perceptions about men's and women's roles in times of conflict, post-conflict and peace time, women almost never participate in peace negotiations. Other obstacles for the realisation of the UN Women, Peace and Security agenda are insufficient resources and the fragmented implementation of different parts of the agenda. These are issues that Sweden's next government needs to address.

## 4. MIGRATION AND ASYLUM POLICIES

**THE LACK OF SAFE ROUTES FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES:** The lack of safe and legal routes to seek international protection means that a lot of people are left behind in conflict zones and war-torn areas, or are forced to put their lives into the hands of people smugglers. Girls and women who are migrants or refugees are particularly exposed to gender based and sexual violence, such as human trafficking and forced marriage, including child marriage. Sweden's temporary asylum legislation means that the majority of those who are granted asylum in Sweden are not allowed family reunification, which locks women and children into conflict areas. Sweden's future government must repeal the temporary legislation and return to a more humane asylum policy.

**WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TO INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION:** Women and children can have their own grounds for asylum which in some cases may differ from those of men. Sweden's future government must ensure that women's and children's own grounds for asylum are investigated and tried in a satisfactory way, to ensure that they can enjoy their rights to international protection. The government must also carry out a complete evaluation of the temporary asylum legislation and account for the consequences of the law in relation to women's equal rights and access to international protection.

## 5. CLIMATE POLICY

**CLIMATE AND GENDER EQUALITY:** Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Climate change is accelerated by the unequal power relations between women and men, and it has unfair gendered consequences. Without the support from the countries which bears the greatest responsibility for climate change, an estimated 100 million people risks falling back into extreme poverty by 2030. Sweden's next government must work to change the structures and the norms which legitimise the continued extraction of fossil fuels. It must also ensure that climate financing is focused on adaptation, emission reductions and the transition to gender equal and sustainable farming with agroecological methods.

**GLOBAL WATER SUPPLY:** In the year of 2025, two-thirds of the world's population are expected to experience a severe lack of clean water. Shortage of water is already hindering girls and women from improved health, education and gender equality, all cornerstones of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Sweden's next government must include clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in strategies for climate adaption. It must also work to ensure that a greater part of climate financing is dedicated to the low-income countries and investments in resilient water and sanitation solutions that can withstand climate change.

